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Photographic Evidence of Destruction of Yen Bai Town

Under Rolling Thunder 22 and 23 (covering the period July 9 to 23), our aircraft were authorized to strike the Yen Bai Ordnance Depot, located 2 nautical miles northeast of Yen Bai town, and to run armed recce on a 40 nautical mile segment of the highway and railroad to the northwest and southeast of Yen Bai. Between July 9 and 17, nine missions were run on the depot, resulting in destruction of 45 percent of its capacity. Also on these missions, a railroad yard near the depot's motor pool was struck, resulting in considerable damage to residential and business-type buildings as well as to rolling stock and railroad facilities. The railroad yard, which was not a fixed target under the Rolling Thunder program, was apparently struck as a target of opportunity under the rules for armed reconnaissance missions. The attached photographs show that the main part of town adjacent to the railroad yard, intact on July 13, had been generally destroyed by July 19 and that other sections of the town had been damaged or destroyed.

On July 12, Hanoi radio charged that US planes had struck medical facilities in Yen Bai town killing some 47 people, mainly medical personnel, in the first of three days of raids. We cannot verify this allegation. Subsequently, in keeping with their general effort to minimize non-medical civilian damage, the North Vietnamese did not release any details in their protests about the July 13-17 raids which, to judge from the photographs, probably caused more damage to the civilian population.

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